



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 105th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 143

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 1997

No. 17

House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. MILLER of Florida).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 11, 1997.

I hereby designate the Honorable DAN MILLER to act as Speaker pro tempore for this day.

NEWT GINGRICH,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 21, 1997, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member except the majority and minority leader limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] for 5 minutes.

POLITICAL SYSTEM OVERHAUL

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, for too long our political system has been in need of an overhaul. Our political campaigns last too long, they are too negative, and they cost far too much. Each year this country breaks the record-setting campaign spending of the previous year, and the end is never in sight. By some estimates over \$2.5 billion was spent on the 1996 elections. Mr. Speaker, clearly the system has become obscene.

Last week President Clinton came to this Chamber and he challenged this

House to pass meaningful campaign finance reform. He set July 4 as the deadline. I believe the House can certainly pass reform legislation by then and declare itself independent of the fundraising tyrant that plagues our system.

We all know that this is not a new issue. It is not an issue that needs to be studied and spoken and lobbied forever. The Members of the House know the issue of campaign finance reform, and they know it well. There is not one credible reason why the Republican leadership cannot get finance reform to the floor by the President's deadline. In fact, before the Republicans were in the majority, the House had passed campaign finance reform legislation. However, it was vetoed by President Bush.

When campaign finance reform laws were first created following the Nixon Watergate scandal, the goal was to get money out of the system and disclose to the American people exactly where the money was coming from to finance Federal campaigns. Over 20 years later, there is more money than ever in the system, and it is not being fully disclosed to the American people.

To begin with, the explosion of what we call soft money has infused more money into campaigns than ever before; nearly \$881 million in soft money, which is about 73 percent of the increase since 1992. This soft money comes from corporate and other sources specifically barred from campaigns by Federal law, and it has seeped into the system over the years and is now completely out of control. Our campaign finance laws need to be tightened when it comes to the issue of soft money.

Another problem is independent expenditures. Various well-funded interest groups from either side of the political spectrum will target their political opponents and spend millions to defeat them. However, these millions will not

count toward the current contribution limits, and the target of the independent expenditure has to raise even more money to stay competitive.

Finally, the cost of the campaigns themselves have completely gotten out of control. Television costs, between production and broadcasting, have gone through the roof. The same is true for radio. And any aspiring politician living in New York, Chicago, or the Los Angeles media market knows that the costs there alone may be the sole reason that keeps him or her from running. They simply cannot afford it.

The fact that someone should be scared away from running for office merely because they do not have the money, I believe, is a tragedy. How many good honest councilmen or small town mayors or clever businessmen or women were kept from going further in public service because they lacked the money? How many great Congressmen and Senators have left us because they were just sick of the fundraising chase and had enough? How many millionaires will decide to run for Congress and win not on the strength of their ideas but on the size of the bank accounts? Mr. Speaker, if we do not have campaign finance reform on the floor by July 4, we may just end up a Congress of millionaires and not of the people.

Although it is still fairly early in the session of Congress, there have been several good campaign finance reform bills already introduced in-house. I just wanted to mention some of them. There is a bipartisan bill introduced by the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. MEEHAN] and the gentleman from Connecticut [Mr. SHAYS] which seeks to implement voluntary spending limits, lower media costs, and eliminate soft money. This bill is the House version of the Senate McCain-Feingold bill that President Clinton endorsed. There is also another voluntary spending limits bill introduced by my colleague from California [Mr. PARR].

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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There is even a bill proposing a constitutional amendment to put limits on campaign spending.

Clearly, the membership of this House is ready to tackle the issue of campaign finance reform and get a bill passed by July 4, the deadline set by the President. It is my sincere hope, Mr. Speaker, that the leadership, the Republican leadership, are ready to meet the President's challenge because I think it is clearly one of the most important issues facing this Congress this session.

HOUSING HOPE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Washington [Mr. METCALF] is recognized during morning hour debates for 1 minute.

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, Housing Hope is an organization founded in 1987 by a consortium of churches concerned about homelessness. From its humble beginnings 10 years ago, it has now become a leader in providing affordable housing to homeless families in Everett, WA, in my district.

Working cooperatively with churches, labor unions, banks, corporations, and government agencies, Housing Hope has launched a \$3.2 million housing development to provide transitional shelter for the homeless, child care facilities, and permanent homes for low-income families. This public-private partnership is a model for the rest of the Nation.

In 1995, for their volunteer efforts on Housing Hope, I nominated members of a union in my district for an award. I am gratified that the President saw the vision Housing Hope is building and presented the union with a Presidential Point-of-Light Award.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from California [Mr. FAZIO] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. FAZIO of California. Mr. Speaker, the clock is ticking.

Last week in this very Chamber, the President called for Congress to pass campaign finance reform by July 4. The President and, most importantly, the American people are committed to meeting that deadline. That is only 143 days away. History shows us we have the support to meet that deadline if the people in charge of the schedule do not drop the ball.

In the 103d, the 102d, and the 101st Congresses, the Democrats were able to corral enough votes in both Chambers to pass legislation to fix the system. A Presidential veto stopped us once, a veto threat stopped us another time and a Republican filibuster in the Senate stopped it a third time.

The burden now rests with the current Republican leadership to keep

campaign finance reform on track. All of us, Democrats and Republicans alike, have a golden opportunity to at long last correct problems that have plagued this system for far too long. Let us not lose it because of stalling tactics or partisan political games.

The American people are looking for results. Their confidence in our election system depends on it. Mr. Speaker, the clock is ticking.

COMMENDING MILLER WILLIAMS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Arkansas [Mr. HUTCHINSON] is recognized during morning hour debates for 2 minutes.

Mr. HUTCHINSON. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to commend a distinguished Arkansas writer and teacher, Miller Williams, who recently composed a poem for President Clinton's reinauguration ceremony.

Mr. Williams, a professor of literature at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville is the author of more than 20 outstanding books of scholarship and poetry. I can add little to the national chorus of praise his colleagues, students, and readers have already offered. His peers have recognized his talent with such prestigious awards as the American Academy of Arts and Letters' Prix de Rome.

In composing a poem for President Clinton's inauguration, Mr. Williams joined the select company of two other great American poets: Fellow Arkansan Maya Angelou and the New England poet Robert Frost.

In his inaugural poem, "Of History and Hope," Mr. Williams celebrates the American tradition of memorializing our past through stories and songs. I congratulate him for his own lyrical and provocative contributions to our Nation's understanding.

I also wanted to say that the people of Arkansas are proud of this contribution. But I also commend him for his contributions to our youth. Mr. Williams has spent nearly 30 years helping students to examine themselves and the history they will inherit. As he suggests in his poem, we cannot control the future. We can only hope to equip the next generations with resources that they will need to make the right decisions. For helping us in this endeavor I offer my thanks and gratitude to Mr. Williams.

MORE ON CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from California [Mr. FARR] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. FARR of California. Mr. Speaker, last week the President of the United States came to this Chamber, and he challenged us to give him a comprehensive campaign reform bill by July 4 of this year.

Mr. Speaker, I responded the next day by introducing the campaign finance reform bill, H.R. 600. Now, Mr. Speaker, if you are committed to campaign finance reform, as your handshake with the President a year ago would lead us to believe, then I would urge you to take up this call and this bill and bring it to the House floor.

Daily we are greeted with headlines in newspapers with stories about questionable campaign practices. Regularly we are confronted by our constituents asking for sanity in the election process.

Always we are faced with the burden of our own campaign needs and how to meet them in a way that does not destroy the faith in the political process. We need campaign finance reform, and we need it now.

H.R. 600 is one of the bills introduced in this House. It embodies comprehensive reform, and it meets the principles of reform that we can all embrace. First it is fair. Real reform does not favor one party over another or one candidate over another.

Second, it reduces the influence of special interests. Political action limits, limits on large donors and the elimination of soft money can accomplish this.

Third, it must be a level playing field. That is, campaigns are made to be competitive by enhancing spending limits.

Fourth, there must be access to this body and to this system by nontraditional candidates. Women and minority candidates should be able to run as easily as anyone else.

Mr. Speaker, many of us wrote you a letter requesting action on campaign finance reform within the first 100 days of this session. The President would like to sign the bill on July 4.

You can make it happen if you are committed to reform. I am. The question is, are you? What day will we vote on campaign reform? The Nation is waiting for your answer.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM IN 105TH CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from California [Mr. MILLER] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, as my colleagues who preceded me in the well have pointed out, one of most important items on the agenda of this Congress is campaign finance reform. Until we are able to reform this system, we will not regain the confidence of the American people that there is a level playing field in the Congress of the United States for the average American and the special interests.

Day after day the press reports to us of special accommodations that are given to those with the most money invested in campaigns of Members of